

**Subject: Geography and Cultures – Western Hemisphere**

**Grade Level: 6**

**Instructional Block/Theme: Block 3 of the Grade 6 Integrated Instructional Guide /  
“Focus on Latin America: Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean Islands”**

## *International Education: Investigate Mexico*

Approximately 90 minutes will be required to complete the map and chart.

### **I. Content:**

I want my students to understand (or be able to):

- A. Use maps to acquire and process information from a spatial perspective.
- B. Use mental maps to organize information about people, places, and environments in a spatial setting.
- C. Recognize the human and physical characteristics of Mexico.

### **II. Prerequisites:**

In order to fully appreciate this lesson, the student must know (or be experienced in):

- A. The development and use of different types of maps and databases.
- B. Identification of physical and human features on maps to analyze place.

### **III. Instructional Objectives:**

The student will:

- A. Locate and label the physical and political features of Mexico on a map.
- B. Practice the process of mental mapping the region.
- C. Interpret tables to complete a Mexico/United States comparison chart of current statistics.
- D. Analyze the map and statistical data to explore and draw conclusions regarding the human and physical factors that have influenced the current conditions in Mexico.

### **IV. Materials and Equipment:**

**Teacher:** overhead projector  
map transparencies: Outline Map of Mexico - Map #1  
Map with Mexican States - Map #2  
lesson packet

**Students:** map  
instruction sheets  
comparison chart  
database  
colored pencils or markers

### **V. Instructional Procedures:**

This lesson is designed to be integrated into the unit “Focus on Latin America: Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean Islands,” as an introduction to the study

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of Mexico.

- A. Ask if any students have visited Mexico. If so, encourage them to tell the class where they have been. Point out the locations on a classroom map.
- B. Explain to the students that geography affects the culture and history of a place. To investigate a country in terms of geography, culture, history, and economics, the study begins with location.
- C. Distribute copies of the outline map of Mexico and the student instruction guide. It is recommended that this map activity be done orally as a class with the teacher modeling the procedure on a map transparency as the students locate on their maps. Reinforce the need for exact and neat work.
- D. When the map of Mexico has been completed, instruct the students to place it in their notebooks for further reference. Then, begin a short mental mapping practice. Without access to any maps, ask them to visualize the relative location of the United States and Mexico. Then proceed by asking them to visualize the relative locations of major physical and political features such as the Gulf of Mexico, Mexico City, Yucatan Peninsula, etc.

**Mental Mapping:** The ultimate goal of map work is to train students in mental mapping—the skill to visualize the relative location of places without the use of maps. Students should be asked routinely to practice this skill upon completion of each map activity to facilitate the organization of information about people, places, and environments in a spatial context. For example, students should have the ability to “see” in their minds that Idaho is bordered on the east by Montana and Wyoming and that Montana is north of Wyoming.

- E. Following this activity, distribute the Comparison Chart and database. The database will require additional explanation. Choose a country other than the U.S. or Mexico and orally work through the chart for that country. After it appears the students have an understanding of the process, instruct them to complete the chart for the U.S. and Mexico. Circulate throughout the classroom to provide assistance and a check for understanding.
- F. An extension activity is provided for further expansion of the lesson and to reinforce the geography standards.
- G. The closure for the map lesson should include a teacher-led mental mapping practice accompanied by several discussion questions generated from the map and comparison chart activities.

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#### **VI. Assessment/Evaluation:**

Upon completion of this lesson, students should be demonstrating success in mental mapping as a tool for viewing the world in spatial terms. In a short paragraph, students should be able to explain some basic similarities and differences between the U.S. and Mexico in terms of statistical information discovered through their work on the comparison chart.

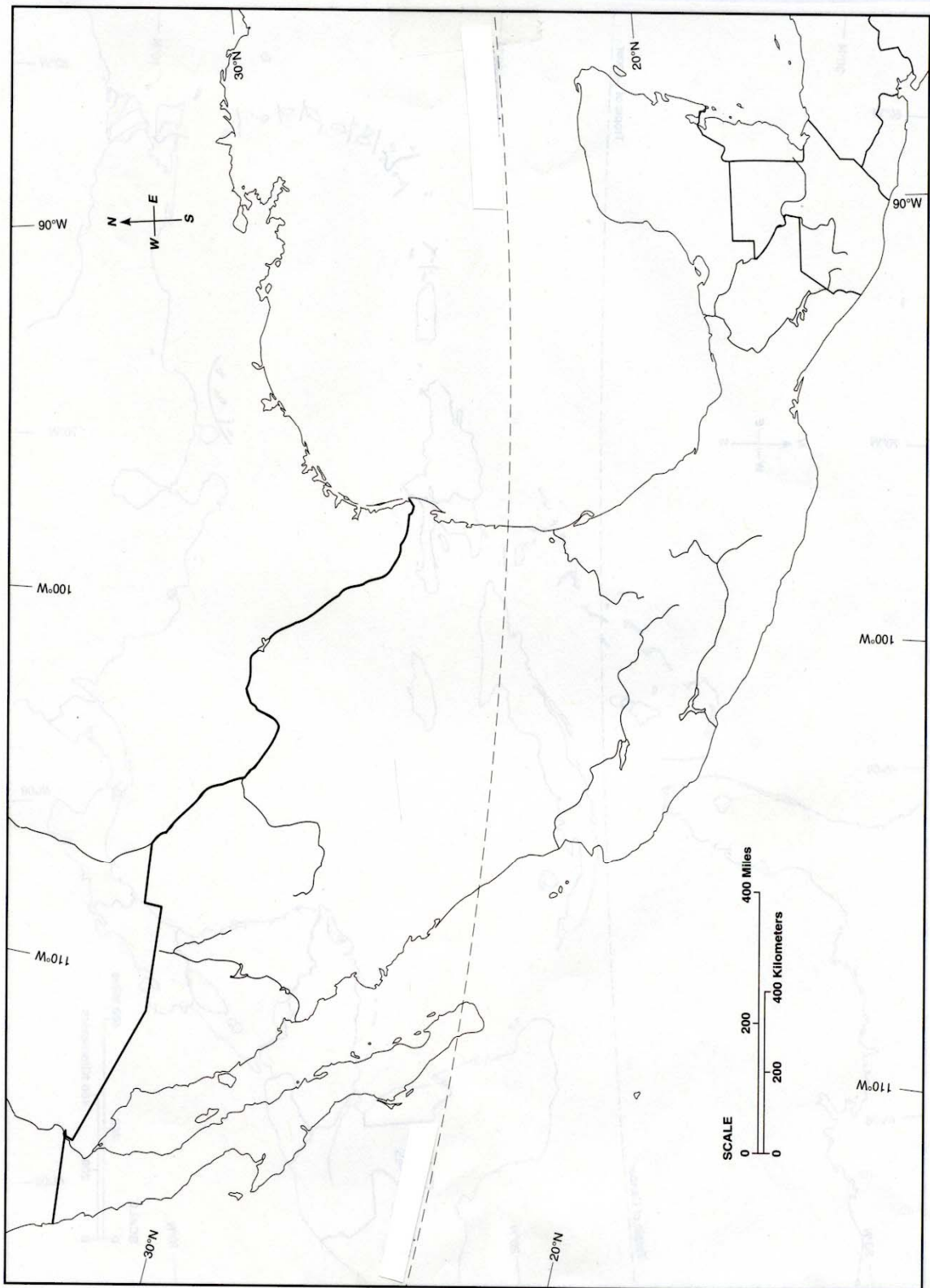
#### **VII. Idaho Achievement Standards:**

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| 6-9.GWH.2.1.1 | Explain and use the components of maps, compare different map projections, and explain the appropriate uses for each.   |
| 6-9.GWH.2.1.2 | Apply latitude and longitude to locate places on Earth and describe the uses of locational technology, such as Global Positioning Systems (GPS) and Geographic Information Systems (GIS).     |
| 6-9.GWH.2.1.3 | Use mental maps to answer geographic questions and to analyze how they reflect an individual’s attitude toward places.  |
| 6-9.GWH.2.2.3 | Identify major biomes and explain ways in which the natural environment of places in the Western Hemisphere relates to their climate.   |
| 6-9.GWH.2.3.1 | Identify the names and locations of countries and major cities in the Western Hemisphere.   |
| 6-9.GWH.2.3.2 | Describe major physical characteristics of regions in the Western Hemisphere.   |
| 6-9.GWH.2.3.3 | Describe major cultural characteristics of regions in the Western Hemisphere.   |
| 6-9.GWH.2.4.1 | Identify patterns of population distribution and growth in the Western Hemisphere and explain changes in these patterns, which have occurred over time.                                       |
| 6-9.GWH.2.5.2 | Analyze and give examples of the consequences of human impact on the physical environment and evaluate ways in which technology influences human capacity to modify the physical environment. |
| 6-9.GWH.2.5.3 | Give examples of how both natural and technological hazards have impacted the physical environment and human populations in specific areas of the Western Hemisphere.                         |

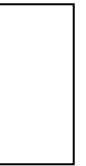
#### **VIII. Follow-up Activities:**

See extension activity.

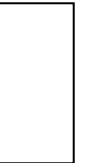
MAP 1



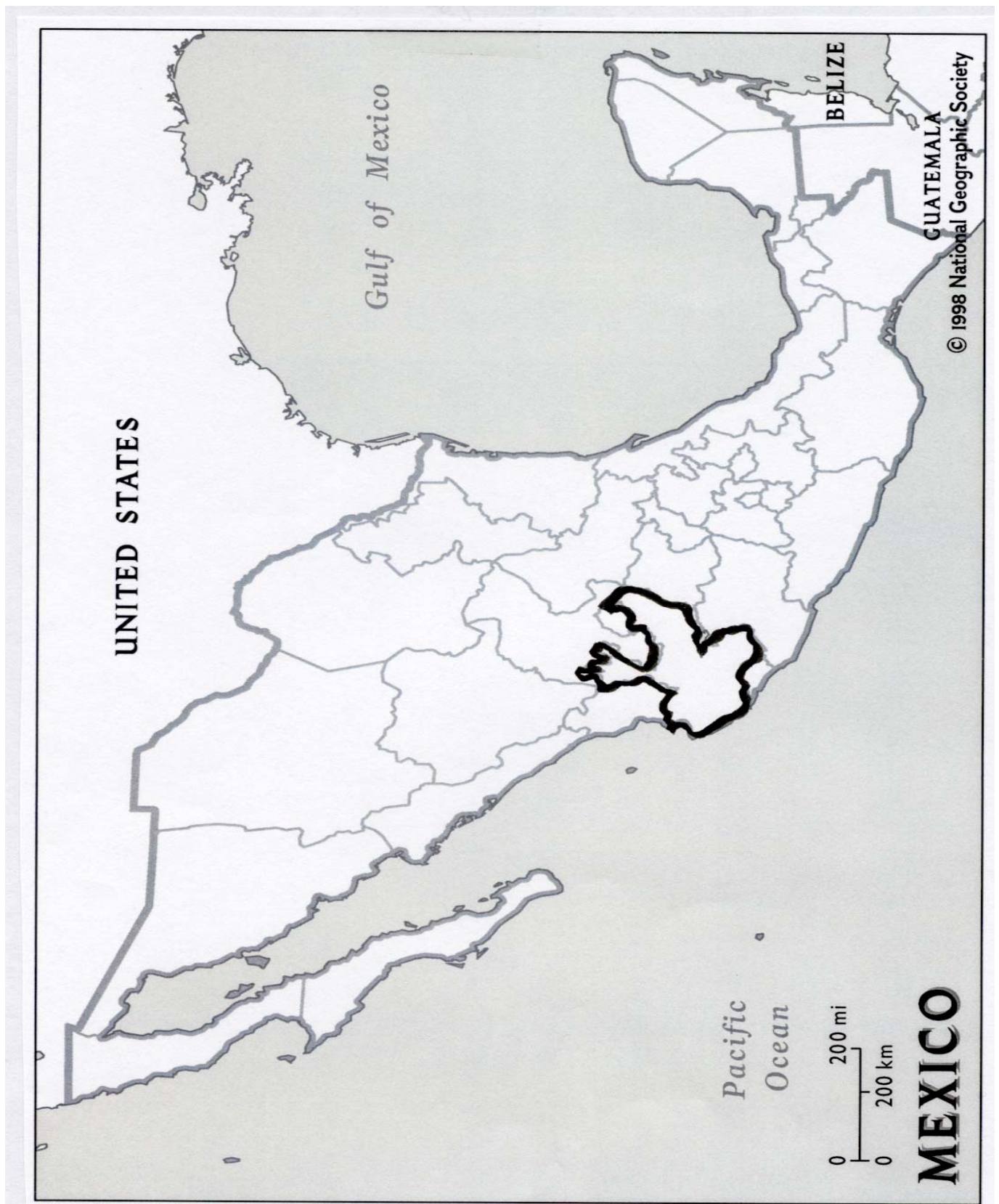
LEGEND



LEGEND



MAP 2



## MAP OF MEXICO

To study an area, it is necessary to be familiar with its **location**. Referring to an atlas or textbook map of Mexico, identify, locate, and label the following physical and political features. Spell and capitalize correctly.

1. In the lower left-hand corner of your map below the scale, write **MEXICO**.
2. Mexico is bordered by 3 countries. Label these countries on your map using all capital letters (upper case).
3. The climate of an area is influenced by latitude - distance from the equator. The two tropics are the lines of latitude where the sun is directly overhead on the summer solstices (the first day of summer in the Northern or Southern Hemispheres). The Tropic of Cancer is at  $23\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$  N and passes through central Mexico. It is indicated by the broken line on your map. Label the **Tropic of Cancer** and the degrees.
4. Mexico has a long coastline. With a blue colored pencil or marker outline Mexico's coastline.
5. The largest of all oceans, the Pacific Ocean contains about 46% of the earth's water. It is larger than all the land in the world put together. Label the **Pacific Ocean** on your map.
6. A sea is defined as either a smaller division of an ocean or a large saltwater body partially enclosed by land. The Caribbean Sea, named after the Carib Indian tribe discovered by Columbus when he arrived in 1492, is the second largest sea in the world. Label the **Caribbean Sea**.
7. A gulf is a large arm of the ocean reaching into land. The Gulf of Mexico, which is approximately 600,000 square miles, is the world's largest gulf. Label the **Gulf of Mexico**, the **Gulf of California**, and the **Gulf of Tehuantepec** on your map.
8. Both a bay and a gulf are bodies of water partially surrounded by land. A bay is a smaller version of a gulf. On your map label the **Bay of Campeche**.
9. A channel is a body of water joining two larger bodies of water. Label the **Yucatan Channel** on your map. Which two bodies of water does it connect?
10. The Rio Grande is a river that has its *source* (beginning) in Colorado. It flows through the middle of New Mexico to El Paso and then becomes the international boundary between the United States and Mexico. The *mouth* of the river (place where the river empties into a large body of water) is at the Gulf of Mexico. With a dark blue pencil or marker, trace the course of this river and label it on your map as **Rio Grande**. (*Rio* is Spanish for "river" so "Rio Grande River" is redundant.)

11. A peninsula is a piece of land surrounded on most sides by water. It is a finger of land reaching out to the water. Baja California is a narrow strip of land separated from the rest of Mexico by the Gulf of California. The Yucatan is a large peninsula in southern Mexico that points toward Florida and separates the Gulf of Mexico from the Caribbean Sea. Label the two peninsulas **Baja California** and **Yucatan** on your map.
12. An isthmus is a narrow strip of land having water at each side and connecting two larger bodies of land. Label the **Isthmus of Tehuantepec**.
13. The major physical features of Mexico include mountains, plateaus, and plains. Sierra Madre Occidental and Sierra Madre Oriental are two mountain ranges in Mexico. “Occidental” means western and “oriental” means eastern; thus the names of these ranges indicate their locations. Label the **Sierra Madre Occidental** and **Sierra Madre Oriental** on your map.
14. Mexico’s large central plateau lies between these two ranges. A plateau is a large plain that rises high above the surrounding land. The vast northern part of this plateau is desert; the southern part has Mexico’s best farmland. Label the **Plateau of Mexico**.
15. The largest desert in North America is the Chihuahuan Desert that covers more than 200,000 square miles. Although it extends into parts of New Mexico, Texas, and Arizona, most of the Chihuahuan Desert lies in Mexico. A desert is an area that receives less than 10 inches of precipitation annually. Deserts are dry but not always hot. The Chihuahuan Desert is extremely hot in the summer but winter temperatures are cool. Label the **Chihuahuan Desert** on your map.
16. Mexico’s two highest peaks lie south of the central plateau. Both were formed by volcanism. Earthquakes and volcanic activity are frequent in Mexico. Label **Orizaba** (18,854 ft. or 5747 m.) and **Popocatepetl** (17,802 ft. or 5426 m.). Use the symbol (∧) to indicate the accurate locations.
17. Mexico City, the second most populated city in the world (after the Tokyo, Japan, urban area), has severe problems with air pollution. Its huge population of approximately 24 million people, thousands of factories, and heavy traffic are the sources of most of the smog. However, its location has also contributed to the problem. Mexico City sits in a valley surrounded by mountains that trap the automobile exhaust fumes and other pollution caused by the large population.
18. Because Mexico City was built on a drained lakebed, it has another problem related to place - it is highly vulnerable to earthquakes. The absolute location of Mexico City is 19° N, 99° W. Place a star or asterisk enclosed in a circle at the exact location and label **Mexico City**. In the first box of your legend (key), place

the star symbol surrounded by a circle, and label it **national capital**.

19. Tourism is a large business in Mexico. Many tourists come to visit the Native American ruins and to relax on the sunny beaches. Cancun, located on the east coast of Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula, is a popular holiday resort. More than 2.5 million people from around the world visit it annually. The absolute location of Cancun is  $21^{\circ}$  N,  $86^{\circ}$  W. Place a dot at the exact location and label **Cancun**.
20. Acapulco, Puerto Vallarta, and Mazatlan are other famous resort cities. A visit to Acapulco might include a performance by the world famous La Quebrada cliff divers. The absolute location for Acapulco is  $17^{\circ}$  N,  $100^{\circ}$  W; Puerto Vallarta  $19^{\circ}$  N,  $105^{\circ}$  W; Mazatlan  $20^{\circ}$  N,  $106^{\circ}$  W. Place a dot at the exact locations and label **Acapulco, Puerto Vallarta, and Mazatlan**.
21. Mexico is divided into 31 states plus the federal district of Mexico City. The official name of the country is Estados Unidos Mexicanos or **United Mexican States**. The largest state is Chihuahua in northern Mexico (95,400 sq. miles). Compare with Idaho at 83,574 sq. miles.
22. Idaho has a sister state relationship with the Mexican state of Jalisco (pronounced HA LEES CO). The primary objective of the Sister State Agreement that was signed February 26, 1996, is to promote partnerships in industry, commerce, tourism, culture, education, agriculture, technology, and environmental protection. Referring to the teacher's transparency map of Mexican state boundaries, outline the state of Jalisco on your map using a red colored pencil or marker. Be as accurate as you can on location. Notice that the resort Puerto Vallarta is located in the state of Jalisco.
23. Guadalajara is Mexico's second largest city and the capital city of Jalisco. The Guadalajara area is known as the birthplace of Mariachi bands and the home of the Mexican hat dance. The absolute location of Guadalajara is  $21^{\circ}$  N,  $103^{\circ}$  W. Place a star or asterisk at the exact location and label **Guadalajara**. In the second box of your legend, place the star symbol and label it **state capital**.



## DATABASE

Junior Scholastic. October 13, 2003, Scholastic Inc.: Jefferson City, MO.

COUNTRY	AREA (SQ MI)	URBAN POP. %	CAPITAL	MAJOR LANGUAGES	FORM OF GOVERNMENT & HEAD	DATE OF ORIGIN	LITERACY RATE (%)	PER CAPITA GDP
	POPULATION	POP. RISE %/YEAR				% OF POP. UNDER 15	LIFE EXPECTANCY	HDI
Guatemala	42,042	39	Guatemala City	Spanish, Amerindian dialects	Presidential-legislative democracy; President Alfonso Portillo Cabrera	1821	78/63	\$3,700
	12,400,000	2.6				42	63/69	0.652
Haiti	10,714	36	Port-au-Prince	Creole, French	Dominant party; President Jean-Bertrand Aristide	1804	55/51	\$1,700
	7,500,000	1.8				40	50/52	0.467
Honduras	43,278	46	Tegucigalpa	Spanish, Amerindian dialects	Presidential-legislative democracy; President Ricardo Maduro	1821	76/76	\$2,600
	6,900,000	2.9				42	67/74	0.667
Jamaica	4,243	52	Kingston	English, Creole	Parliamentary democracy; Prime Minister Percival James Patterson	1962	84/92	\$3,900
	2,600,000	1.5				31	73/77	0.757
Mexico	756,062	75	Mexico City	Spanish, Mayan, other indigenous languages	Presidential-legislative democracy; President Vicente Fox	1810	94/91	\$9,000
	104,900,000	2.4				33	73/78	0.800
Nicaragua	50,193	57	Managua	Spanish, English, Amerindian dialects	Presidential-legislative democracy; President Enrique Bolaños	1821	67/68	\$2,500
	5,500,000	2.7				42	66/71	0.643
Panama	29,158	62	Panama City	Spanish, English	Presidential-legislative democracy; President Mireya Moscoso	1903	93/92	\$6,000
	3,000,000	1.8				32	72/77	0.788
Saint Kitts and Nevis	139	43	Basseterre	English	Parliamentary democracy; Prime Minister Denzil Douglas	1983	97/98	\$8,800
	50,000	1.2				31	68/74	0.808
Saint Lucia	239	30	Castries	English, French patois	Parliamentary democracy; Prime Minister Kenny Anthony	1979	65/69	\$5,400
	200,000	1.1				31	70/74	0.775
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	151	44	Kingstown	English, French patois	Parliamentary democracy; Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves	1979	96/96	\$2,900
	100,000	1.1				37	71/74	0.755
Trinidad and Tobago	1,981	72	Port-of-Spain	English, Hindi, French, Spanish	Parliamentary democracy; Prime Minister Patrick Manning	1962	99/98	\$9,500
	1,300,000	0.6				25	68/73	0.802
United States	3,717,796	79	Washington, D.C.	English, Spanish, others	Presidential-legislative democracy; President George W. Bush	1776	97/97	\$37,600
	291,500,000	0.6				21	74/80	0.937

## COMPARISON CHART: MEXICO AND THE UNITED STATES

Using current data provided by your teacher, the Internet, an almanac, etc., complete the following chart. Notice areas of similarities and differences as you progress.

	<u>UNITED STATES</u>	<u>MEXICO</u>
Official name	_____	_____
Area (sq. mi.)	_____	_____
Population	_____	_____
Capital	_____	_____
Major languages	_____	_____
Form of government	_____	_____
Current leader	_____	_____
Literacy rate (%)	_____	_____
Life expectancy	_____	_____
Per capita GDP	_____	_____
Currency	_____	_____

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\* **Literacy rate:** the percentage of people who can read and write.

**Per capita GDP:** the value of all goods and services produced within a country in one year (its gross domestic product), divided by its population. It is one way to gauge a nation's wealth.

**Life expectancy:** the age to which a newborn can expect to live. Improvements in medicine have helped people live longer.

**Currency:** the money used in any country

## **EXTENSION ACTIVITY**

Imagine that you have recently returned from a 10-day vacation in Mexico. Write a letter to a friend or relative describing your experiences. Choose 5 features from the map activity for discussion in your letter. Include a combination of both physical and human locations making sure one location is in the Idaho sister state of Jalisco.

For each location, explain when and how you arrived, the general direction in which you traveled (e.g. from Mexico City we took a bus southeast to Orizaba), and what sights and activities you experienced. Research for additional information about the locations to use along with the information previously obtained from your Mexico map activity to provide specific and accurate descriptions. For example, if your tour included a visit to a government building in Mexico City, give the specific name of that building.

Observe the correct letter writing form and follow the rules for capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and grammar.